

Washington Post
Interview with Donald Trump

Donald Trump: Hello?

Robert O'Harrow: Mr. Trump, it's Bob O'Harrow here with Drew Harwell and Shawn Boburg. Thanks for making time for us.

Donald Trump: Hi, fellows. How are you?

Drew Harwell: Hi. Great, Donald. How are you?

Donald Trump: Okay. I'm very good. Thank you. What is this for, the book, the book that's being written in less than a week?

Robert O'Harrow: Yeah, it's a tight deadline, but it's a little longer than a week. We're certainly working diligently, and --

Donald Trump: I just hope the book could be fair because otherwise, you know, we'll see what happens. But it would be nice if the book could be fair. But we'll see.

Robert O'Harrow: That's our guiding light, is being fair and diligent.

Donald Trump: I would hope so. I would hope so.

Robert O'Harrow: Thanks, anyway, for having us. Shawn Boburg is going to start.

Donald Trump: Sure.

Drew Harwell: Donald, we'll just kick it off right here. And thanks again.

Donald Trump: Go ahead.

Drew Harwell: We were talking with some critics who are saying over the years that you've been sort of obscuring your wealth when you say you're a billionaire. And looking back --

Donald Trump: I have been what?

Drew Harwell: Obscuring your wealth when you say you're --

Donald Trump: Well, take a look at my assets. I mean, you know, just take a look at my assets.

Drew Harwell: Well, yeah, we're looking at those. In '90 your accountant, Leventhal said you were worth negative 295 million, and at the same time you said you were worth 3.7. Over the time, you know, last year you said you were worth 8.7, and then you're worth 10 billion a month later.

Donald Trump: No, no. I am worth more than \$10 billion now. If I ever sold my assets, I would get well over \$10 billion from my assets. I have the best assets. I have among the greatest real estate in assets in the world, including a big chunk of the Bank of America building in San Francisco, including the 1290 Avenue of Americas, including all of these buildings I own, including all of the land I own all over the world.

Drew Harwell: Right. But over the years, why have you and your accountants disagreed so many times? And why is there this level of obscurity?

Donald Trump: No, we just -- look, I mean I've built a great company. I have very little debt. My debt-to-asset value is extremely low, as you probably noticed. I've built a great company. It's got great cash flow, tremendous cash flow. I have very little debt, and I have among the best assets in the world.

Drew Harwell: Mr. Trump --

Donald Trump: The assets are disproportional because some of them are like buying a painting, like, as an example, you can almost look at any of them. You look at the land I own on the Potomac River, on the Pacific Ocean or any of them.

Drew Harwell: -- the question though is why has there been this pattern of discrepancies between what your accountants say you're worth and what you publicly say you're worth? And how do you account for those differences?

Donald Trump: Well, what do my accountants say I'm worth?

Drew Harwell: Well, for example, in 2004 they said you were worth 3.5 billion and you said you were worth 6 billion.

Donald Trump: Who were the accountants that said 3.5?

Drew Harwell: In the deposition that you gave under the Tim O'Brien case.

Donald Trump: I'm just saying though that Tim O'Brien is a psycho. Tim O'Brien, he wrote a book that failed badly. It was a book -- and frankly, it was a lawsuit that I should have won.

But you can't win that kind of a lawsuit. But I enjoyed bringing it anyway because it cost him a lot of money. But Tim O'Brien is a guy that knew what I was worth because he looked at some of the assets, not all of the assets. He knew he wrote a phony book and, you know, the book failed. It cost him money. You know, he's a dumb guy. He's a guy that had -- he doesn't have a clue. But he did have an axe to grind, so that's it.

R O'H: Mr. Trump, let me be really direct here because I think you like that anyway.

Donald Trump: Sure. Go ahead.

R O'H: The direct question is this: in this realm of politics and the White House and running for the presidency, a key expectation is transparency. I'm going to put it to you directly. You are not transparent on your finances. How do you account for that? What do you expect people to do about your lack of transparency?

Donald Trump: What are you -- ? So you think I'm worth \$3 billion or \$4 billion? You don't think I'm worth \$10 billion.

R O'H: I have no idea what you're worth because we can't discern your net worth from the documents that you released. It feels like a little smoke and mirrors. You may be worth \$20 billion --

Donald Trump: Let me just explain. First of all, I'm a private company. Right? You understand that?

R O'H: Hold on. You're a private company, but you are a public candidate and there are expectations for transparency.

Donald Trump: Okay. Okay. But excuse me, I have a financial disclosure form, right, which I've put in and which shows very substantial assets. The problem with it is that you have boxes. I guess I've checked many, many boxes where the value is 50 million or more, okay? And in some cases, those values are a billion or more than a billion, but the boxes say 50 million or more. I can't help it that the private disclosure wasn't meant for a person like me. It was really meant for politicians. The financial disclosure form that you obviously have was put in and it was put in very strongly to represent people, but not necessarily people that have my kind of wealth. It was really put in to represent politicians where it talks about how much is it worth. And I'm not giving you exact numbers, but I would say like 100,000, a million --

R O'H: Mr. Trump, I know what you mean. I mean, hearing [sounds like] on that one more time, why should anyone believe you know when we're looking at -- ? And it's not just the personal financial disclosure, but it's with the \$8.7 to the \$10 billion. If voters care about your wealth as you think they do, I mean why are they not getting sort of precise figures outside of the -- ?

Donald Trump: Because I have assets which are all iconic, many of them are iconic assets. If I ever put them up for sale, they would get a number that would be far greater even with the value of the income. I mean, I have a lot of income. I have very little debt. You do agree that I have wonderful assets and relatively little debt. You do agree with that, right?

R O'H: We can't know for sure. Just as in 19 --

Donald Trump: Why? How can you not know?

R O'H: In 1990 you claimed 3.6 --

Donald Trump: Wait a minute, 1990?

Drew Harwell: We're looking at the history to try to judge the current Donald Trump. And in the past --

Donald Trump: How can you -- ? I know. But 1990, that's ancient times. 1990?

Drew Harwell: If in the past --

Donald Trump: By the way, just so you understand, 1990, that was when the depression started. That was called the real estate depression.

Drew Harwell: You're right. Let's move really quickly. I know you've been asked about this, your tax returns. You're saying you want to wait until after the audit.

Donald Trump: Yes. Correct, as anybody else would.

Drew Harwell: Nixon released during the audit, and many other candidates have released during the audit. Your own tax

attorney said that they are not being audited, the forms between 2002 and 2008. Will you release those forms?

Donald Trump: As anybody else would do, they're all linked and I will release when the audit is finished. I have been audited for 15 years straight.

Drew Harwell: But there's no legal reason for you not to release them.

Donald Trump: When other people don't get audited, I get audited. I think it's very unfair, but that's the way it goes. I've been audited for 15 straight years. I think it's a very unfair situation. When the audit is done -- it's routine audit. But when the audit is done, I'll release my tax returns. Okay?

Drew Harwell: Okay. Thank you for that. Moving on. We've also got some documents that showed you've relied heavily on your family, including your father and your siblings, for financial assistance even when you were saying you're a wealthy man and spending a lot of money. In 1981, you had borrowed \$7.5 million from your father and you received a lot of trust income. You had \$3.5 million in Castle chips from your father, the \$10 million loan from your siblings. How did those loans square with the claims that you're a self-made billionaire?

Donald Trump: The only reason I did that was because they got more interest by giving it to me. They got more interest by doing it with me. My relationship with my siblings is

outstanding. It was everything I did. You're talking about \$3 million and you're talking about -- during a depression, by the way. I could have gotten very easily that money from banks if I wanted it. I didn't choose to go that way. My father said, oh, let me do it, it's easy with the chips. I could have gotten the money from banks very easily and just paid back the banks just like I paid back the chips. I paid back the chips, as you know. I would have paid back the banks. I could have any one of -- many banks give me the money if I wanted to.

Drew Harwell: So why did you not get the money from the banks instead of the chips when the chips were later to be -- ?

Donald Trump: As I said, it was easier. My father said, oh, I'll do this. And I paid my father interest on the loan. I paid my father interest.

Drew Harwell: You're saying your family benefited by giving you money?

Donald Trump: Absolutely, because they get interest on the loan.

Drew Harwell: So was that in effect --

Donald Trump: More interest than they would have gotten in CDs.

Drew Harwell: So you're saying you were doing a favor to your family?

Donald Trump: They got more interest than they would have gotten in CDs, so they loved doing it. I could have gotten that money very easily from a bank. Within 10 minutes I would have had that money.

Drew Harwell: Got it.

R O'H: All right.

Donald Trump: What year was that by the way?

R O'H: The Castle loan was December 1990.

Donald Trump: Wow, a long time ago. I would have been very easily able to get that money from other sources, if I wanted.

Shawn Boburg: Okay. Fair enough.

R O'H: Your former advisor, Roger Stone, told us that Roy Cohn was more to you than just a legal advisor. You called Cohn your guide to New York City, and others have described him as a mentor. But just in your own words, how would you describe your relationship to Roy Cohn?

Donald Trump: Well, first of all, you have to know Roy Cohn represented me on numerous cases, all of which I won. But Roy Cohn represented me on some lawsuits. Roy Cohn was a lawyer for me, but Roy Cohn also represented Si Newhouse and the Newhouse family. He represented Condé Nast. He represented George Steinbrenner of the New York Yankees, and he represented many other people in this city. I mean, Roy was not unique to

me. Roy was a lawyer. He did a great job for me. He was a really good lawyer. When he wanted to be, he was a great lawyer. When he wanted to be and he wanted to be for me because he wanted to show me how good a lawyer he was. But Roy represented Si Newhouse, Condé Nast, there's George Steinbrenner --

SB: But Roy was more than just your lawyer.

Donald Trump: No. Roy was a lawyer. Roy was a good lawyer, but not necessarily a business person.

SB: You described him in your book as a friend.

Donald Trump: Yeah, he was a friend. And I have many friends. Usually my friends are business related because those are the only people I get to know.

R O'H: He had a huge group of friends who were interesting, powerful, celebrity, rich folks, political folks. We've talked to some, including Alan Dershowitz who said that he expected to hate Roy, got to know him and he ended up liking him. He thought he was charming.

Donald Trump: I can understand that.

R O'H: What's the deal with Roy Cohn? Because a lot of people think he's the worse man of the 20th century in America and others speak very highly of him. What was his deal?

Donald Trump: I mean, fellows, I've had cases where if I would say that Roy Cohn -- I'd be at a dinner with 10 people,

this happened once, and they said who's representing you on a certain case or that I have, which, believe or not, considering the size of my business, there's not that much litigation. I know that sounds a little strange, but that's okay. And I'm not a settler. I don't like settling cases because, otherwise, they would be. But I've had cases where people are sitting around the table, and when the name Roy Cohn comes up they would actually leave the dinner. His reputation among some people was not very good. But I will tell you that as a lawyer, for me he did a very good job. He was a very effective lawyer, a very good lawyer.

And I got a kick out of Roy Cohn. I actually got a kick out of him. Some people didn't like him and some people were offended by him. I mean, they would literally leave a dinner. I had one evening where three or four people got up from a table and left the table because they couldn't stand the mention of his name. But with all of that being said, he did a very good for me as a lawyer. But he represented, and you sort of just said it, he represented many people throughout New York. I mean, I'm not the only one. He represented Mets' George Steinbrenner. I loved him.

R O'H: Why did you get a kick? We're trying to understand him. Why did you get a kick out of him? And Zion, the *New York Times* guy, described him as being kind of a guide and

introducing you to New York and showing you how to operate. He was a tough guy and it's pretty clear that you learned at least some of your moves from Roy Cohn. Tell us how you got a kick out of him?

Donald Trump: Who was that, Sidney Zion?

R O'H: Yeah.

Donald Trump: Yeah. He was a nice guy, Sidney Zion. Is he still living? Is he still --

R O'H: No. He passed some years ago.

Donald Trump: Yeah, I thought he was a decent guy actually.

R O'H: But what did you get a kick out of Roy Cohn about?

Donald Trump: Because I like to win, that's why I got a kick. I mean, I won some good things with Roy Cohn, some good cases with Roy Cohn. He represented me well. For me, he tried very hard. He was a very smart guy. And when he tried hard, he would do very well. For some people he didn't try so hard, but for me he did. I get a kick out of winning and Roy would win. He did a good job for me as a lawyer.

Now Roy would have parties and I'll tell you what, some of the most important people in New York would go to those parties. I'm sure you've heard that. Yes, some of the most important people in New York would go to those parties.

R O'H: What about tactics, techniques? He basically had an approach that --

Donald Trump: I understand what you mean. Roy was a tough cookie. I mean he was tough. He was a tough guy. He could be a nasty guy on occasion. He could also be a very nice guy, but he could be a very nasty guy. But he was a very effective litigator.

SB: Mr. Trump, as you know, he was disbarred for ethical lapses. He was also your attorney. I mean, in your estimate --

Donald Trump: Well, that was years later. That was at the end.

R O'H: Right. Well, actually some of the infractions date back before he was your attorney and during the time he was your attorney. But my question is --

Donald Trump: That I didn't know. I know, well, he was disbarred at the end. At that time Roy was sick. Actually, Roy died, as obviously you know the story I guess. I knew that he was very sick and they went after him after he was sick. I've always said if he were well, he probably would have been able to defend himself. By that time he had not much -- I don't think he represented me. I don't think he represented Si Newhouse. I don't think he represented George in the end. But Roy was very sick. I've always said that had he been healthy, he would have been able to fight that off. But he wasn't though.

R O'H: So do you think that he was unethical as the bar found?

Donald Trump: Well, I can't speak to that. I could only say with respect to myself he was not unethical. He was a very good lawyer, but he was very straightforward. He was tough, but he was ethical. I don't even know what charges he had a problem with. I can say that Roy Cohn for me was a very good lawyer, very hard driving. He did a good job. We had great success. I know at the end he had difficulties, pretty substantial difficulties. But again that was something -- I don't know what those difficulties were.

R O'H: Just because we want to keep it crisp here, you have other things to do fairly soon, a couple of quick questions for you.

Donald Trump: Go ahead.

R O'H: You stuck with him through thick and thin even when he was accused of being too close to the mob. When he was accused of ethics violations and all that, you stuck with him. Some people would say that's Donald Trump being loyal. Other people would say why would he do that. Why did you stick with Roy Cohn even though other people accused him of all this crazy stuff?

Donald Trump: Because I'm a very loyal person and we had great success. I had great success with Roy as my lawyer and I

stuck with him. You know who else stuck with him? George Steinbrenner stuck with him, and so did Si Newhouse.

Bob O'Harrow: A lot of people did. There were a lot of people that went to bat for him during the disbarment.

Donald Trump: Yeah, because they were loyal.

R O'H: Before we move from Roy Cohn, tell us three things that we want to help explain you in part by your relationship with Roy Cohn, three things that you learned from Roy Cohn that you think are valuable, for you that have been valuable in your career.

Donald Trump: Well, I learned something about the legal system and how it works because I've used Roy. Roy was recommended to me by somebody. I used Roy and I had good results. But I learned something about the legal system. I learned some good things about living life and I learned something that you shouldn't do in life because I watched Roy's mistakes in life. Roy had some difficulties in life and I had watched that. He represented me for quite some time, as he did other people, and you could learn a lot about a person both good and bad. But I would say that --

R O'H: Tell us the good stuff. How did you learn how to live life well? What did he show you?

Donald Trump: Well, he was a hard worker when he wanted to be. And when he wanted to work hard, he would do very well.

When he didn't work hard -- I set him up with a client once. He didn't like the person. He was very oriented towards liking people or not liking people. He was a very different kind of a guy. When he didn't like somebody, he didn't like this particular client, and he really didn't care about even doing the job. He didn't do a particularly good job because he didn't care about the client. When he likes the client, when he really likes somebody -- he liked me, he liked Si Newhouse, he liked George Steinbrenner. When he liked somebody, he was very, very effective.

R O'H: I guess I was getting at the last question on the Roy Cohn thing because we have other stuff we want to touch on. One can't help but think that on his public relations and legal tactics, you seemed very in-synch with his approach which is be very, very aggressive, get out there, let the world know what you're doing and so on. In other words, your rhetoric and your approach in this campaign seems uncannily like what you may have learned during the first time he represented you when the government accused you and your dad of being prejudiced or discriminatory and he was very --

Donald Trump: By the way, they accused many of the landlords in New York, you know that.

Male Voice: Yes. Right, [coss-talking] and the others.

Donald Trump: I mean there were many, many landlords. And when we settled, there was no admission of guilt.

Bob O'Harrow: Right. We've reported that. Yeah, we understand. But what about the tactics and the approach, the rhetoric? Did he -- ?

Donald Trump: Well, I think I have a natural instinct for that. I don't think I got that from Roy at all. I think I've had a natural instinct for that. I don't think I got that from Roy. You mean going out there and being out? I think that that was not something Roy taught me. Actually, I didn't think Roy was that much out there. Roy was very strong in court and, therefore, would get publicity. But I would say that --

Bob O'Harrow: He got to know the media. But in any case, we'll move on from Roy Cohn. Do you miss him, by the way, before we leave it?

Donald Trump: Well, he was a very good lawyer. I miss good lawyers. I have some good lawyers now, but Roy was very unique. I tell you, he had a great legal talent when he wanted to use it.

Bob O'Harrow: And he liked you.

Donald Trump: I think he did, yeah. I think he did. He liked me.

Shawn Boburg: Mr. Trump, Shawn Boburg here. Going back to some of the financial difficulties you've had in the early 1990s, I'm just curious --

Donald Trump: By the way, just so you understand, because sometimes it gets misreported and they always do corrections - or usually they do. Unlike other people, many people, I never went bankrupt. Do you understand that?

Shawn Boburg: Personally bankrupt, absolutely we know that.

Donald Trump: Nor did I come close. I did take companies and renegotiate debt and do a number in I guess four times. I used the lawyers. But you know who else uses the lawyers? Carl Icahn used them. Henry Kravis used them. Leon Black --

Shawn Boburg: Yeah, yeah, we got it. Mr. Trump I totally --

Donald Trump: Wait a minute. Sam Zell used -- we all used them.

Shawn Boburg: I totally get the distinction between personal and corporate bankruptcy.

Donald Trump: But the point is that many other people at high level use them. I mean Sam Zell used them.

Shawn Boburg: I understand. So you as a businessman, you did make decisions personally that had impacts and basically decided where your corporation would end up. A few examples

that we've looked at are your major purchases - the Shuttle, the Plaza Hotel. How much personal responsibility do you have for these bankruptcies and the financial problems you faced or you're currently facing?

Donald Trump: Many of them turned out to be great deals. First of all, from the standpoint of a business deal, many of them turned out to be good deals because I borrowed 100 percent of the money. I didn't put up almost anything. That was the time when the banks would give you 110 percent and even a 125 percent. Today they don't do that anymore, but today I don't use banks very much because I don't need that cash. I don't really need -- if I want it --

By the way, I have Deutsche Bank and I have other banks that I use, but I don't need money so I don't use banks very much. The banks would give you 125 percent if you need it. Like, for instance, the Plaza, I got the money from the banks.

Shawn Boburg: Mr. Trump, I'm sorry to cut you off. We know a lot about the specific deals. What I'm getting at is your sense of your own personal responsibility for the indisputable financial troubles.

Donald Trump: I understand that. Well, I can only speak for myself. When I was representing myself, even deals that didn't work out were great deals because I got tremendous tax advantages by doing the deal. The banks would give me more

money than the deals cost. I would walk away. And when the market went bad, I mean it wasn't me that went. The market went horrible in the 1990s. And then what I do is I've negotiated with the banks and I make the deal either good or I get other things out. I mean, I was making some great --

Shawn Boburg: Here's the thing. We know that -- hold on a second, Mr. Trump. We know that you came out of Atlantic City with money and that it was good to you.

Donald Trump: I made a lot of money. Let me just put this one thing in, one of the great fallacies. A lot of people say I know you made a lot of money on a lot of things, but Atlantic City wasn't good. I made a lot of money in Atlantic City. Don't forget I was there during the heyday and I made a lot of money in Atlantic City. In the end, I made a lot of money in Atlantic City because I financed the jobs up. They had a thing called junk bonds, and I put tremendous junk bonds on and that was good for me.

Then everybody in Wall Street said, oh, let's take it public. Well, when I took it public, you take it public and it's like selling a house or selling half the house or whatever you were selling. But I made a lot of money in Atlantic City if you were just asking about me.

Bob O'Harrow: Here's what we're asking about. I just want to rephrase Shawn's question. The question is you may have come

out good for yourself, but did you make good business decisions or did those decisions lead to bankruptcies which hurt a lot of people?

Donald Trump: They were great decisions for myself. I mean, I'm representing me. I'm not representing other people. I'm representing me. When I made these deals, as you said yourself, I mean I make great deals for myself. These deals were great. I know the bankers. These bankers are tough guys. They can handle themselves. But I made these great deals for myself. I wasn't worried about the banks. When somebody said, oh, why didn't you take a tremendous amount of money in junk bonds, and I'd say, well, I'll take extra. They say, well, why don't you add another 100 or 200 million to it, I'll say, oh, I'll take it. Then they say why don't you take the casinos public or something. You know, if you take them public, you make money on that.

All I can say is I wasn't representing the country. I wasn't representing the banks. I wasn't representing anybody but myself. I was representing only myself.

Shawn Boburg: Mr. Trump, I've spoken to some contractors who said they lost hundreds of thousands of dollars, and people who were laid off. I guess the question is given that there was some personal loss for others involved beside yourself, do you have any regrets for any decisions you made in Atlantic City?

Donald Trump: No, because these contractors made a lot of money with me there over the years. Maybe they gave back a little bit, but they made a lot of money doing Trump Plaza. Trump Plaza was a very successful job for years. It's a heyday. That was a heyday before they had all the competition.

And by the way, if you look at Atlantic City right now -- I left seven years ago. My timing was, as one journalist said, impeccable. I left Atlantic City seven years ago. I made a lot of money in Atlantic City. And when I left Atlantic City, I left because it was approved in Pennsylvania. It was approved in Delaware. It was approved in Virginia. It was approved in all these states, these bordering states. Connecticut. And I started seeing the handwriting on the wall. I also left because they built the convention center in the wrong location. I told them that. They didn't build the airport like they promised they'd do. They made tremendously bad decisions, so I left Atlantic City.

Shawn Boburg: I'm aware of the history of Atlantic City.

Donald Trump: I was representing myself. I wasn't representing some banker that lives on Fifth Avenue. I was representing myself against these.

Shawn Boburg: And yet, even when you're representing yourself, you criticized people who predicted the financial

troubles that your casinos would face. I'm thinking of Marvin Rothman.

Donald Trump: No, I don't know. That story is so old and so boring. It's been written a hundred times. It's irrelevant. That was peanuts. I mean, what difference does it make? It was peanuts.

Shawn Boburg: Was he right?

Donald Trump: I made a lot of money in Atlantic City. And again, remember this, I was representing myself. I wasn't representing the Fifth Avenue banker. I was representing Donald Trump. So for myself, they were all good deals. And I made a lot of money in Atlantic City for years. Then with the refinancing and going public, it wasn't [sounds like] so good.

Shawn Boburg: Let's stick with Marvin Rothman for a second.

Donald Trump: Remember this, we're chaptering. You could mention a name, Carl Icahn with TWA and other things. I could give you almost everybody that you write about. I could tell you that somewhere along the line that all I did was I used the laws of the country to my benefit. Again, I'm representing Donald Trump. I made a lot of money there. What can I do? Am I supposed to apologize?

R O'H: Just to keep this going, I want to stick with Marvin Rothman because we moved past bankruptcy. In a meeting

with executives one week after the Taj opened, you bragged about getting Rothman fired according to a deposition by Donald Busney [phonetic] who was a former employee of yours. Why did you brag about getting Marvin Rothman fired?

Donald Trump: I don't believe I did. I don't care. I don't really know Marvin Rothman. It sounds like this guy is a very small -- it was a very small event.

R O'H: Well, there was an extended litigation of this

Donald Trump: I mean, it's an event that was a small event. It ended up getting settled for a small amount of money. I don't really think about it. I mean, I think there was a litigation. Yeah, there was a litigation many, many years ago. It was settled for a small amount of money. Not a big deal.

R O'H: Before we lose you, thank you for sticking with us on this stuff. These aren't easy questions and we appreciate your answers.

Donald Trump: They're actually pretty easy questions.

R O'H: There's a broader question that over the years and during the campaign where there is a perception that you say things that can be demonstrated not to be true or they can be demonstrated to be exaggerations. Getting back to being president of the United States, what's the deal with the alleged exaggerations? Is that just part of a public relations thing? Why do you exaggerate? Or do you always tell the truth?

Donald Trump: I have to know what you're talking about. I'll tell you what, I do my absolute best to be truthful. I'd have to know what you're talking about, but I will say this. Everybody said, oh, you'll be out of -- number one, they said he won't run. Then they said, oh gee, he won't put up his financials. I put up my financials. My financials turned out to be extraordinary - very low debt, very big cash flow, and great assets. Then they said, oh, well, he just hit 6 percent, he won't go any higher. Then he hit 12 percent. Then he hit 18. Then he hit 25 percent. He won't go any higher. And then I hit this last week I guess 79 percent. Nobody talks about it won't go any higher, et cetera, et cetera.

Drew Harwell: Mr. Trump, let's talk about these debts for a second.

Donald Trump: No. Wait a minute. No, no. The thing about exaggerating, everyone said I wouldn't be successful with this. They said I wouldn't be successful with other things, too, and I was. And by the way, I often can take things that would maybe not be successful, a market crash in the middle of a job, and I had been able to make them successful.

Drew Harwell: Let's talk about when you said markets crashed when we're talking about debts. Why did you personally guarantee \$830 million or so on all those loans back when you say ancient history in the '90s? Your dad obviously was a

spendthrift [sounds like], as you know well. Why would you personally guarantee so much money if it wouldn't help -- ?

Donald Trump: I never had my father guarantee loans. Why would I do that?

Drew Harwell: No. I'm saying he was very thrifty.

Donald Trump: My father was a Brooklyn builder. Let me explain something just so you would understand. My father was a Brooklyn builder. He built in Brooklyn. There wasn't a lot of --

Drew Harwell: But this is about you. Why did you personally guarantee so much in loans?

Donald Trump: What loan did I guarantee?

Drew Harwell: You personally guaranteed loans for the Trump Shuttle, for the Plaza up to \$800 million. Some in Atlantic City. This is a lot of money.

Donald Trump: It didn't mean very much because I didn't have to pay under personal guarantee, right? So what difference does it make? I mean it didn't mean anything.

R O'H: Well, you asked a question and I'd like to answer what difference it makes.

Donald Trump: No. But I wasn't even talking about banking because I get a loan on rate of interest.

R O'H: Well, let me ask you something. Here's why all this matters. It is history, but it's relevant to a man running

for presidency. You're going to be the Republican candidate. Here's the deal. You made a promise not to use junk bonds and then you used junk bonds, and so it looks like you either had no choice or you misled the Casino Control Commission, and people are uncomfortable.

Donald Trump: Say it again. I what? I used junk bonds, what? Go ahead.

R O'H: You promised not to use junk bonds in February 1988, not to use junk bonds to the Casino Control Commission. You flat out told them I will not use junk bonds, that's for stupid and failure companies.

Donald Trump: Maybe sometimes markets change and maybe we went to them and told them we're going to use junk bonds because what happened is junk bonds became a very normal way of financing. And when I made that statement -- I don't know when the statement was made. I don't remember making it actually. But when I made that statement, if it was made at all, probably junk bonds were not a good method of financing. But over a period of time they became a very, very standard method of financing.

R O'H: Actually, it was in 1988, and junk bonds were already common when you made those comments.

Donald Trump: But there were periods of times where junk bonds -- actually the interest rates got very low and they were

a very good way of financing. I remember I think there was a period of time when I said, well, maybe we should use junk bonds. We would have gotten back to the Casino Control and we would have said, you know what, we would use them.

And don't forget, the Casino Control Commission had to approve. Any time we did a financing, it was approved by the casino control. You couldn't do financing without approval from the Casino Control Commission. So if I decided to change my mind or if I decided to be flexible or if junk bonds became the vogue, which they really did, anything I did had to be approved. Any financing I did had to be approved by the Casino Control Commission. So we went back. And just so you understand, if we went back and we did that, any financing had to be approved by the Casino Control Commission.

Drew Harwell: Right. And so while we're talking about public gaming season and financing --

Donald Trump: By the way, you don't mind that I'm taping this conversation?

Drew Harwell: No. We're taping it as well. That's fine.

Donald Trump: Okay. Good. And so we are all on this, because I'm taping it also. Any of the financing had to be --

Drew Harwell: Sure, sure. So now you're the frontrunner of a conservative party and yet you've depended so much on government kickbacks, government financing, tax abatements.

Donald Trump: Wait, wait, wait. You used the word government kickbacks? There's no government kickbacks. I don't know what you're talking about. What is a government -- ?

Drew Harwell: Tax payments at the Grand Hyatt of \$400 million over 40 years. Lots of millions of dollars at the Trump Tower. How do you explain that --

Donald Trump: Well, excuse me. Wait. It was a very successful job. It was a tremendous success, the Grand Hyatt Hotel. I ended up selling it and it was a great, great success.

Drew Harwell: But you did so with a lot of public money.

Donald Trump: What?

Drew Harwell: You did so with a lot of public money, and you're running for a party that is very against that use of public money for private projects.

Donald Trump: No, I [audio glitch] with a tax abatement. Because I was able to get a tax abatement, it got built. Now, the city had a choice. When I started that job, that area of New York was decaying and in bad shape. So the city had a choice. If it was not built, then that area of the city might not be the same as it is right now.

Drew Harwell: So have you changed your mind on tax abatements and public health for private projects now that you're --

Donald Trump: It depends on what -- for instance, if you build low-income housing, you can't do it without help. If you do certain types of jobs, you may need that. It depends on market. It depends on the conditions. It depends on the city. If you go, as an example, into Detroit, if you want to build something in Detroit which would be very noble, you can't do that unless you have a form of subsidy, you just can't do it. Now, we could all say don't take the subsidy. Don't do it. But then you're never going to have anything built, and you won't create any jobs, and you won't create anything.

Drew Harwell: But you recognize that the rest of your party disagrees with what you're saying?

Donald Trump: I've actually heard that. The Grand Hyatt was a great success. I made a lot of money on the Grand Hyatt. It was a beautiful job. It was one of my earlier jobs in Manhattan. But, you know, let's put it this way. If I didn't get the subsidy -- it was really a tax abatement. I don't know if that's called a subsidy, but it was a tax abatement. If I didn't get the tax abatement, the job would never have been built.

Shawn Boburg: Mr. Trump, I want to go back to something and put it in the context of you occupy the White House now. So you're the president of the United States in a theoretical way here. Are you going to follow through on the approach that you

took in Atlantic City where you said you were in it only for yourself?

Donald Trump: No. It's totally different. No, no. That's what I was trying to point out. Look, when I was in Atlantic City I made a lot of money. And I used every trick in the bag. Always following the rules and the laws and the regulations but I used every trick in the bag. Originally, I did it -- I made a lot of money for years just running and I hit the good market. But then at the end, when the market started to change and everything else, then we hit the great junk bond market, then we hit the good taking public market. But in the end I was only working for myself. Now I'm working for the country. Now I can put skills to work that nobody else has like I have, and I can put those skills to work. We have \$19 trillion in debt. It's going to be \$21 trillion very soon before you finish this crazy book you're writing.

R O'H: It's not crazy.

Donald Trump: Who knows? Well, it's going to be a phony deal. I know that because I mean the way the *Washington Post*, although I did just get a nice article. Hold it. Ah, Sheldon Adelson says I endorsed Donald Trump, from the *Washington Post*. I can't believe it. I'll just put it on my desk.

Male Voice: He's had a lot of successful casinos.

Donald Trump: Sheldon Adelson has a lot of respect for me. Oh, I see, he wrote a nice article about me.

Male Voice: Hang on a second. Let me ask you this.

Donald Trump: Wait, wait, wait. Did you see this article in the *Washington Post*?

Shawn Boburg: We've seen it.

Male Voice: The fundamental difference. I want to go to an issue about the debt. You can't renegotiate or do you really think you can renegotiate debt?

Donald Trump: No.

Male Voice: People have said they thought that was nuts and --

Donald Trump: No. The *Wall Street Journal* covered it very accurately yesterday or the day before - Richard, a writer. No. It is sacred. You cannot do that. But what you can do is if interest rates go up, you can buy back debt at a discount. You understand that. But no, you don't want to negotiate a debt when it comes to the United -- you don't want to negotiate with respect to the debt, but you will have moments when you can buy back debt at discounts but not having to do with negotiation. For instance, if interest rates go up, et cetera.

No, it was incorrectly reported by a couple. They knew they were wrong, but the *Wall Street Journal* covered it two days ago on the front page extremely accurately. Number one, I will

make our country strong so the debt will be paid back. And now I'm not working for myself anymore. Don't forget when I do this I'm not working for myself. When I do this, I'm working for the people of the country. And nobody can do this better than I can do it. Nobody. But with respect to the debt, you absolutely cannot negotiate that debt. It's sacred as far as I'm concerned.

Shawn Boburg: Mr. Trump, I just want to go back to Atlantic City for one short question. You made clear that you were working for yourself in Atlantic City during this interview. But if you go back in the transcripts, your testimony before the Casino Control Commission at the time, you repeatedly say that your projects are good for Atlantic City and you hold that out as a reason why they should be approved. You don't talk about your own profits as being the driving force for the decisions that you want the Casino Commission to make.

So here's the question. Given that again you're saying that your election will be good for the country, how are we to take your comments about your primary concern being yourself in Atlantic City in the context of what you are saying now?

Donald Trump: Well, first of all, my projects were good for Atlantic City. We put a lot of people to work in construction. We then put a lot of people to work running the buildings for many years. I mean they're still up. They're

still employing a lot of people. So my projects have been good for Atlantic City. A lot of people got work.

Just so you understand, right now, 75 percent of Atlantic City is bankrupt because of bad decisions made by government. Atlantic City itself is bankrupt. You would know that. You've been seeing what's going on. Again, I made a great decision because I got out seven years ago, which was unbelievable timing. In fact, some very smart people gave me great credit for that as you probably read. But my timing was very good for getting in. My timing was great. I got in at the absolute epitome. The right time. For many years it did very well. Then the junk bond world came along, but I did very well in a different form.

Shawn Boburg: Mr. Trump, also -- I'm sorry.

Donald Trump: By the way, these jobs have been good for Atlantic City.

Drew Harwell: Sure. Yeah. And while we're talking about you doing good, you said you're an ardent philanthropist. You said you've given more than \$100 million to charity over the last five years. But when you look into the money that was given to the Donald J. Trump Foundation, you haven't donated any actual money. It's all been the golf course and I'm sure --

Donald Trump: Well, you don't know that because I don't give most of the money to the foundation.

Drew Harwell: Where do you give it?

Donald Trump: Some people use the foundation. The foundation is a very small part of what I give.

Drew Harwell: How much of your personal money have you given to charity in the last five years?

Donald Trump: I think you wrote a story. I've given a lot.

Drew Harwell: How of your personal money?

Donald Trump: If I give money through the foundation, then every charity looks at me and say, could you do this? Could you do that? Could you give me this? Because it's essentially public. I don't consider the foundation to be a major part of my giving.

Drew Harwell: So who are you giving money to specifically?

Donald Trump: I give mostly to a lot of different groups.

Drew Harwell: Can you give us any names? One name, two names.

Donald Trump: No, I don't want to. No, I don't want to because --

Drew Harwell: Dollar amounts at times? What -- ?

Donald Trump: No. I'd like to keep it private. But the foundation is not my primary form of giving. It's a form, but it's --

Drew Harwell: What became of that \$3 million you said you raised for vets but you haven't given away yet?

Donald Trump: The money for the vets? I have given a lot of money to the vets. I gave a lot.

Drew Harwell: Who did you give it to?

Donald Trump: I'm the only one -- a lot. I gave it to some of the people that you saw on the list, and then the rest we're giving it to other groups, another veterans groups.

Drew Harwell: We don't have records of that \$3 million that you said you'd raise for vets.

Donald Trump: Why should I give you records? I don't have to give you records. But I've given millions away. By the way, I've given millions of dollars away to the vets and I'm very honored by it and all because I said I'm not going to go into a debate. I raised millions of dollars and we gave it vets. So we've given a lot [cross-talking]. Wait, wait, wait.

Drew Harwell: You won't give one charity that you've given it to.

Donald Trump: No. Why should I tell you? Why would I want to do that?

Drew Harwell: Well, because we want to share the word of your good giving.

Donald Trump: Oh, you're not going to share it because you're going to put -- anything I do, you'll put a negative

spin. I've given millions of dollars away and you make it sound like it's a negative thing and not a positive thing.

Drew Harwell: Just tell us who. We can ask and then we can share that.

Donald Trump: You know what? Because you're so nice. No, I'm not going to tell you. I'd rather just give it and just do it my own way. It's much, much nicer. I gave you like 20-some odd groups of people that we gave it to, veterans groups. We're giving more to other veterans groups, and we've already given more.

Shawn Boburg: Mr. Trump, we just have two more questions and then we'll let you run. The story today about John Miller. Did you ever employ someone named John Miller as a spokesperson?

Shawn Boburg: I think he hung up. I'm pretty sure he hung up.

Robert O'Harrow: Yeah, he hung up. That's the end of the interview with Donald Trump. This is Robert O'Harrow, Shawn Boburg, and Drew.

Rhona Graff: Hello, Rhona Graff. Hold on a second please.

Robert O'Harrow: Yes, thanks.

Rhona Graff: Okay.

Robert O'Harrow: We're calling Donald Trump back here to see if we lost the connection or if he hung up. [Long pause]

Rhona Graff: Rhona Graff.

Robert O'Harrow: Bob O'Harrow here. We lost our connection.

Rhona Graff: Oh. Hi, Bob. Yeah, I heard you got disconnected. Actually, he can't take the call now. I don't know what happened, but we're going to have to reschedule maybe for another day?

Robert O'Harrow: Okay. Let me know.

Rhona Graff: I heard some of it though. Boy, those were really negative questions. Do you have any good questions to ask him? Some positive questions?

Robert O'Harrow: Well, I think we all agreed and he said they were soft questions. We're just trying to ask the questions of a guy who might be the president, so I don't think they were negative. They're just trying to get to the root of stuff. It's a little bit hard to pin down particulars because he won't provide them. And for newspapers, we have to try to get to the particulars.

Rhona Graff: All right. Well, I think we have to at this point now reschedule it for some time next week. So let's talk on Monday and we'll see if we can regroup. Thank you.

Robert O'Harrow: Okay. Thank you. Bye-bye.

[End of file]

[End of transcript]